



News from the
Committee on Natural Resources
Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II - Chairman

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Statement of U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources
Oversight Hearing on
“Offshore Drilling: State Perspectives”
February 24, 2009

The Committee is meeting today for the second in a three-part series of oversight hearings designed to examine our Nation's current offshore drilling policy and help to determine the course of that policy in the future.

Two weeks ago, on February 11th, we heard from representatives of environmental organizations, tourism boards, and the fishing industry. Today we will hear from representatives of coastal state governments from around the country. And tomorrow we will hear from oil and gas industry representatives.

As I said two weeks ago, these hearings are intended to afford all sides an opportunity to weigh in as we begin work to determine the best way to accommodate drilling while also ensuring that our offshore resources are managed in an environmentally and fiscally responsible manner.

Our coastal states are critical to this discussion. They are literally on the front lines of the offshore drilling debate and their needs and challenges are vitally important considerations for us all.

As I stressed at our last hearing, I am not opposed to drilling. I understand the benefits of domestic oil and gas production. But I am also aware of the risks. This ongoing discussion is designed to examine the trade-offs that would be involved in expanding offshore oil and gas drilling, and I look forward to working with Members on both sides of the aisle as we determine the best way to move forward.

I thank the witnesses for agreeing to appear today, and I now recognize our Ranking Member, Mr. Hastings, for his opening remarks.